



Opportunity Pathways Program Guidelines

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1 Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW

On 24 January 2016, the NSW Government announced a new 10-year vision for social housing, *Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW (Future Directions)*. This initiative aims to transform the social housing system and break the cycle of disadvantage.

(See <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/reforms/social-housing/future-directions>)

Future Directions is underpinned by three strategic priorities, aiming to transform the sector:

- More social housing
- More opportunities, support and incentives to avoid and/or leave social housing
- A better social housing experience

2 Opportunity Pathways Overview

Opportunity Pathways is a new program initiative under *Future Directions* providing social housing clients and Rent Choice recipients with support to increase their economic participation and facilitate positive exits from social housing to housing independence, where appropriate. The program has been developed using a strong evidence base, including incorporating the views of tenants.

The program will be voluntary and delivered in various sites across NSW from 2019 for three years. Subject to successful outcomes, an extension of the program will be considered.

Providers that deliver the program in the FACS District Illawarra or FACS District Sydney will be required to participate in a discrete trial component of the program. The trial will take place in two locations – Towradgi and Punchbowl.

The trial will test in a public housing context, a model that allocates time limited leases to clients who agree to engage in education, employment and support. More information on the trial component is available in Section 3.3.8.

2.1 Who is the program for?

Opportunity Pathways is voluntary and designed for social housing tenants and their household members, approved social housing applicants and clients receiving Rent Choice subsidies who aspire and have the capacity to, with the appropriate support gain, increase and retain employment.

Participants may include clients who are not working, are seeking a job, or want to work more hours or improve their employment situation.

2.2 Program objectives

The Opportunity Pathways program objectives are to:

- Assist participants to gain, increase or retain employment, by accessing supports and practical assistance, and participating in activities, training and work opportunities.
- Encourage and support participants to positively exit social housing or Rent Choice subsidies to housing independence, to reduce their reliance on government assistance, where appropriate.

2.3 Intended program outcomes

The key intended program outcomes are as follows:

- **Economic:** participants achieve and are engaged in employment in a field or industry identified in an agreed Training, Employment and Housing Plan ;
- **Education and skills:** participants have improved skills through training or education and improved work readiness;
- **Empowerment:** participants improve their confidence, increased self-esteem and hope for the future;
- **Social and community:** participants are role models for a working lifestyle to family and peers;
- **Health:** participants have improved physical and mental health; and wellbeing;
- **Home:** participants achieve housing independence, where appropriate.

The program outcomes align with the Human Services Outcomes Framework, which provides a common set of population-level wellbeing outcomes and indicators for NSW government and non-government agencies.

2.4 Program outputs

Key program outputs include:

- Promotion of the service to social housing tenants and their household members, approved social housing applicants and clients receiving Rent Choice subsidies and other relevant stakeholders.
- Establishment of referral protocols that are comprehensive and focus on attracting and retaining participants into the program.
- Eligible clients identified, recruited, assessed and accepted into the program.
- Services delivered to clients including training, workshops, one-on-one support, case management and wrap around support, coaching and mentoring, work experience placements, job placements and work retention support, where needed (Note: Services may be delivered either directly by the lead provider(s) or in partnership with other service providers).

Contracts will clearly articulate outcomes to be achieved and how these will be monitored and measured.

2.5 Program principles

The aim of Opportunity Pathways is to change how we engage with our clients. It will set a clear expectation that for many, social housing is not for life, and for those with the capacity, social housing should be used as a stepping stone to greater independence and less reliance on government assistance. This independence is achieved through greater economic participation through accessing education and employment programs with wrap around support and encouraging housing independence (where appropriate).

The principles of the voluntary state-wide program are as follows:

- **Voluntary:** The program is voluntary and aimed at individuals who demonstrate a willingness to participate and are motivated to improve their economic situation through education and employment.
- **Person-centred:** Training, Employment and Housing Plan and holistic services are built around the aspirations, needs and personal circumstances of each participant.
- **Strength-based:** The program adopts an approach that focuses on a person's skills, strengths and capabilities.
- **Flexible:** Support is flexible to address a range of personal goals and individual barriers to education, employment and employment retention. It may scale up and down as the participant's situation changes.
- **Long-term outcomes:** The program focuses on developing career paths and up-skilling to achieve each participants longer term employment and housing aspirations in addition to helping clients secure a job in the short-term.
- **Localised:** Support services are delivered in partnership with local service providers and employers, connecting people to local work opportunities.

3 Service Delivery Model

3.1 Eligibility

Opportunity Pathways is designed for social housing tenants and their household members, approved social housing applicants and Rent Choice subsidy recipients who aspire and have the capacity to, with the appropriate support gain, increase and retain employment. For more information see the [Opportunity Pathways Policy](#).

To be eligible for the Opportunity Pathways program, participants need to be:

- 17 or older and meet the school leaving requirements; AND

- living in public, community or Aboriginal housing; OR,
- receiving FACS Rent Choice subsidies – these are time limited subsidies of up to three years with the expectation that recipients will exit the subsidy as their circumstances improve; OR
- an approved social housing applicant on the NSW Housing Register.

In addition, to be accepted into the program participants need to:

- Demonstrate a willingness to participate, are motivated and able to commit to a mutually developed Training, Employment and Housing Plan to work towards their training, employment and/or housing independence goals.

Not all eligible clients will be able to participate in the Opportunity Pathways program as there are limited places. The Opportunity Pathways Provider will determine how to prioritise eligible clients for selection. Clients will be notified by the Opportunity Pathways Provider if they are selected to participate in the program, on a waiting list or ineligible to participate. Timeframes may vary between Opportunity Pathways Providers.

3.1.1 Target Clients for Opportunity Pathways

The following are considered target clients for the program:

- Public housing or Aboriginal housing tenants (tenancies managed by FACS) who:
 - are on a two year lease – the intention is to engage them in Opportunity Pathways to support them to exit the lease in the two year timeframe.
 - are due for a lease review of a two or five year lease - the intention is to engage them in Opportunity Pathways to work towards exiting within the timeframe of their new lease.
 - have a household member on Youth Allowance – the intention is to support young people to engage in employment and exit social housing, thereby reducing intergenerational disadvantage. See Section 4 for links to other programs.
 - have children in the household over eight years old (as the household will lose Family Tax Benefit there may be more motivation to engage in employment for financial reasons, or in a position to participate if children are at school).
- Community housing tenants – target clients are to be agreed with participating providers.
- Rent Choice subsidy recipients – the intention is to build the capacity of tenants and reduce tenants requiring continued assistance after the expiry of the subsidy.

3.2 Underpinning Service Delivery Principles

3.2.1 Using behavioural insights to influence behaviour and attitudes

Providers are expected to use a behavioural insights approach to engage with social housing clients, set goals and identify aspirations and assist participants to work towards achieving them.

Behavioural insights recognises that to influence the choices and decisions of clients, program design should set out to make these choices and decisions 'easy, attractive, social and timely'¹.

Providers are encouraged to use this framework in designing their service delivery model.

Behavioural insight principle	Examples of activities by FACS, AHO or Community Housing provider	Examples of activities for Opportunity Pathways providers
E- How do we make it easy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sign ups in the home – take the messages to the client. Use of IVY application to do on the spot referrals to the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide outreach to participants of Opportunity Pathways and provide a full suite of support and brokerage to remove all barriers to engagement.• Work with housing providers to make the referral process early and easy.
A – How do we make it attractive?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide clear and positive messages about the benefits of participation and housing independence – for example, housing independence means a person has the ability to move to different locations and have access to a broader range of housing choice in the private rental market	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide clear and positive messages about the benefits of participation and housing independence – for example, the ability to move to different locations and have access to a broader range of housing choice in the private rental market.
S - How do we make it social?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of positive case studies of success to promote the social element of engagement.• Communicate with broader tenant groups. For example through housing provider newsletters. This could include regular articles in Your Home on employment, opportunities and success stories.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of positive case studies of success to promote the social element of engagement.• Recruitment of groups of cohorts in the same location so that people have peer encouragement.• Develop a peer mentoring network.• Communicate with broader tenant groups. For example through provider newsletters. This could include regular articles on employment, opportunities and success

¹ <http://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/publications/east-four-simple-ways-to-apply-behavioural-insights/>

		stories.
T – How do we make it timely?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate the message of setting housing independence goals into the application process. • Incorporate this message into correspondence with tenants during the sign up process. • Not just messaging about 'how to be a good tenant' but messaging about 'how social housing should be used as a stepping stone' • Incorporate this message into correspondence with tenants at allocation of a social housing property. • At time of sign up of all new tenants – this will include messaging around setting goals for employment and housing independence and being referred immediately to Opportunity Pathways. • Continue to deliver this message to clients during Client Service Visits in their home and through other correspondence received by the client during the tenancy. • At time of lease review, immediate referrals to this program and others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity Pathway providers to respond to referrals within 48 hours of receipt • Opportunity Pathway providers to meet and do goal setting with the client within a week of referral so that momentum is maintained.

3.2.2 Client participation in program design and delivery

It is expected that the provider(s) will take a participatory design and continuous improvement approach to program design, implementation and monitoring. This will include strong client participation, as well as engagement with FACS and other stakeholders. Providers will be requested to identify their approach to client participation as part of the tender process.

3.2.3 Partnerships to access relevant services

Opportunity Pathways service providers will need to have a clear understanding of existing State and Commonwealth programs which may place mandatory obligations against many potential participants.

For example, for many participants their source of income may be a Newstart Allowance. These people will have a Job Plan in place which links receipt of income to their plan. It will be the Opportunity Pathways service provider's responsibility to establish networks with local providers such as job active, Transition to Work and Parent Next providers.

The provider(s) is expected to develop referral and partnership arrangements to facilitate a participant's access to a range of services to help deliver the core components of the program. This includes services identified in the case plan to provide wrap around support, services that deliver training, voluntary services that facilitate pre-employment support (such as Dress for Success), voluntary services that facilitate access to driving lessons, and many more.

Provider(s) are expected to have and/or form strong partnerships with a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, migrant and refugee support organisations to facilitate referrals and to facilitate culturally appropriate service delivery.

The NSW Government recently released the [Aboriginal Procurement Policy](#) in July 2018 which is expected to create opportunities for Aboriginal owned businesses and encourage Aboriginal employment through NSW Government Contracts. For all contracts covered by the Policy valued over \$10 million (ex GST) suppliers will be asked to provide a draft Aboriginal Participation Plan.

3.2.4 Partnerships to facilitate work opportunities

A key focus of the program is that a participant has access to employment opportunities with wrap around support. It is important that the participant is offered opportunities for training and courses that are highly relevant to local jobs.

Importantly, the Opportunity Pathways service provider is expected to work with training partners experienced in working with clients facing multiple barriers or complex needs.

The provider(s) is expected to proactively partner with local employers to facilitate a participant's access to work placements, work experience and employment options. This includes partnerships with employers who have a demonstrated commitment to employing clients from diverse backgrounds.

Work placements must also be relevant to the participant with a clear link to the participant's Training, Employment and Housing Plan. Work placements must have a direct link to the training that a participant undertakes, to facilitate a smoother transition to employment.

The provider(s) must also build relationships with employers to support work retention and any issues that may have arisen. The provider(s) must ensure further support can be provided to program participants, where appropriate, to increase capability and further reduce barriers (See Core Component 3.3.6)

3.2.5 Culturally appropriate service delivery

The provider(s) will ensure that there are culturally competent approaches for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and clients who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to ensure that:

- clients are engaged into the program successfully

- person centred case plans (Training, Employment and Housing Plan) identify any barriers that a participant may have to accessing training or employment. Some of which could include cultural and/or language barriers. An example could include the participant requiring specific language skills for a work context.
- The case manager assigned to the participant has culturally competency to work with the client groups.
- The employment, training and other activities are suitable to any specific cultural requirements.

FACS may set targets for the expected proportion of Aboriginal participants in specified locations.

3.3 Service Delivery Core Components

3.3.1 Client recruitment, referral and assessment into the program

Participation in the program is voluntary and flexible. Participants may self refer, be referred from housing providers, other support service providers or employment agencies. The provider(s) is expected to take a proactive and creative approach to promoting the service and recruiting participants, also using Behavioural Insights techniques as mentioned above (see 3.2.1).

It is expected that the provider(s) of this program will establish active referral pathways with the following:

- FACS Housing Tenancy teams located in the service locations, in order to get referrals for social housing tenants, especially those newly entering social housing on two (2) year leases, or those having a tenure review at the end of a fixed term lease. (See target groups at Section 3.1.1)
- FACS Housing Access and Demand teams located in the service delivery locations, in order to get referrals for clients who are homeless and applying for social housing assistance, who may be on the NSW Housing Register.
- FACS Private Rental Brokerage Service (PRBS) and Rent Choice workers in order to refer clients wanting support to access private rental, including Rent Choice.
- Participating Community Housing Providers (CHPs) and Aboriginal Community Housing Providers (ACHPs) – both their Access teams and their tenancy teams
- Support providers of the client groups to encourage referrals into the program
- Employment agencies to encourage referrals into the program

The above parties (FACS and other services) will be expected to proactively work with the provider(s) to make referrals. FACS will also implement internal referral protocols in operational policies and procedures.

Provider(s) will also need to identify how they will promote the service directly to clients e.g. through SMS campaigns (via FACS to FACS tenants), letter boxing (via FACS to FACS tenants, or CHPs to their tenants), pop ups in social housing estates, working with neighbourhood centres and a range of other strategies. The provider(s) must work to motivate clients to participate in the program and ensure access is provided using Behavioural Insights principles of EAST, as mentioned above (see 3.2.1).

Provider(s) will need to work proactively with FACS Central office and FACS District offices and participating CHPs and ACHPs to identify and implement appropriate promotional strategies.

The provider(s) will undertake a comprehensive assessment of all clients who are referred to the program to determine their eligibility and suitability for the program in accordance with the eligibility criteria above. The assessment will be used to inform the development of the Training, Employment and Housing Plan. As part of the assessment, provider(s) will determine the level of support a client may require and their individual needs. This may include assessing barriers that may impact on participation such as a criminal record which may impact employment post training. Similarly assessing whether a client has had long term disengagement from the labour market; low levels of confidence to undertake formal training; low levels of literacy; and personal issues that impact their ability to meet the commitments associated with formal training and employment.

It is the responsibility of the provider(s) in collaboration with FACS and participating CHPs and ACHPs to develop appropriate assessment tools to develop a comprehensive person centred client assessment and Training, Employment and Housing Plan. Provider(s) will be expected to document reasons for declining referrals.

3.3.2 Person-centred case planning

Provider(s) will co-develop a comprehensive person-centred case plan called the Training, Employment and Housing Plan (TEHP) with each participant that is accepted into the program and provided with a service. The TEHP will be informed by a detailed assessment of the client's needs.

The TEHP must be realistic and contain achievable goals for the participant. It must be tailored to the individual participants situation, support needs, employment and housing aspirations. For example, the TEHP will take into account the need for a client to find a job in the short term, while working towards achieving longer-term, sustainable employment. The TEHP will also clearly articulate the participant's desired housing aspirations and a specific plan to positively exit social housing or private rental subsidies, where appropriate.

The TEHP will clearly articulate all services the participant will be linked into to provide the wrap around support, the timeframes for completion of all

activities and goals, and how the participant will be supported to achieve these goals. Examples of what may be detailed in the TEHP include (but are not limited to):

- the participant's short-term (6 months – 1 year), medium term (1-2 years) and longer term (2-3 years) employment goals, and other relevant goals (linked to the Human Services Outcomes Framework)
- the participant's short-term (6 months – 1 year), medium term (1-2 years) and longer term (2-3 years) housing goals and the steps required to achieve these goals (noting this will be a different approach for a social housing client, a client on the Housing Register and a Rent Choice recipient)
- key issues and barriers the person is facing and their support needs
- education or training proposed for the participant
- steps the participant commits to undertaking to engage in training or paid work and how they will be supported to achieve these steps
- steps the participant commits to undertaking to achieve their housing outcome goal e.g. understanding how to apply for private rental and how they will be supported to achieve these steps
- the frequency of contact needed with the service provider to support the client through the program. There is strong evidence that the higher the number of contacts, the more positive outcomes in increasing employment. Providers are therefore required to meet with clients at whatever frequency is necessary to ensure ongoing engagement and positive outcomes are achieved, taking into account client needs and their involvement with other agencies (see 3.3.3 below).
- the amount of brokerage required for the client to reduce barriers to training and employment

The TEHP is agreed and signed by the participant, and all parties who will have a role in supporting the participant in the program.

3.3.3 Active case management

The provider(s) is required to use an active case management approach to provide ongoing wrap around support throughout the duration of a participant's engagement with the program.

The provider will develop and review the TEHP; and support the client in achieving the agreed outcomes (see Figure 1). In developing the TEHP, it is up to the provider(s) to determine with the participant which activities are required to achieve the desired outcomes.

The provider(s) are required to meet with clients face to face on a quarterly basis (or more frequently where more intensive support is required) to review their TEHP. The TEHP reviews will:

- record milestones and outcomes that are reported; and
- update the TEHP to reflect whether a person's situation has changed.

The provider(s) is required to support and advocate for the client to achieve the activities and goals within the TEHP. Following each review the provider(s) will:

- provide personal reminders to attend activities, such as courses and activities; active follow up on non-attendance
- advocate and support clients in addressing challenges and barriers that a client is experiencing to achieve their agreed plan, including making referrals to manage other client needs such as health and wellbeing; or access to child care
- the provider(s) will coordinate with other service providers to ensure clients are receiving the support to achieve their goals and aspirations; and;
- undertake action that will encourage the re-engagement of clients who have disengaged from the program. This includes working closely with employers and ensuring on-site support and mentoring is available.

Figure 1. Active Case Management approach to service delivery



3.3.4 Pre-employment preparation service

Pre-employment preparation is for participants that may require extra support prior to involvement in Core Component 3.3.5 Employment Support. Participants will be offered a range of pre-employment preparation activities if required to address any barriers to seeking employment. The provider(s) is expected to assess the participant's needs and tailor a program to each individual, either through direct delivery or through referral and coordination with other existing services. It is expected that the provider will ensure activities are flexible e.g. allowing courses to proceed even with relatively small numbers of clients.

Most importantly, pre-employment preparation needs to focus on engagement, using behavioural insights and other approaches. This should include:

- An approach to inspiring and motivating participants to begin setting goals and engaging in the program

- An approach that supports participants to develop confidence, self esteem and resilience in order to lay the foundation for ongoing engagement in the program
- An approach that sets up peer support networks early, so that participants feel part of a social activity, and links participants to appropriate mentoring
- An approach that ensures participants overcome obstacles to participation for example, providing personal reminders about attendance; active follow-up of any non attendance and referrals to deal with issues that arise

Pre-employment preparation activities will further include, but are not limited to:

- English language skills, including industry-specific English skills
- Literacy and numeracy skills
- Driver's licence attainment
- Independent living skills
- Personal presentation skills, including access to suitable work attire
- Addressing drug and alcohol, or other health or mental health issues through links to appropriate services
- Support to address practical barriers, such as childcare
- Soft entry into work activities, such as two to four hours of work exposure rather than a full working day

3.3.5 Employment support service

Participants will be connected to education, training and employment opportunities tailored to their needs, aspirations and capabilities. Case managers will identify strengths, skills and aspirations of each person and match these to job categories and relevant courses which are likely to lead to job opportunities. They will also:

- Assist with identifying, providing and/or accessing good quality training linked to real work experience and job opportunities
- Liaise with local employers to identify job opportunities that match the individual's capabilities and aspirations, and connect the participant to these opportunities
- Actively assist with the application and interview processes

Training courses and activities may be delivered by the provider(s) or by referral to other services to ensure the participant has the skills to attain and retain employment and may include:

- Access to pre-vocational or vocational training courses relevant to local employment opportunities and aspirations. Courses offered cover a wide range of interests appealing to a diverse client group

- Support with learning job readiness skills (e.g. CV writing, computer literacy, interview/presentation skills, digital literacy, communication skills, teamwork skills, self-management skills, time management)
- Supporting life skills and resilience (e.g. how to resolve conflict, how to regulate behaviour, how to deal with disappointment)
- Facilitation of volunteer, work experience or job opportunities through links with local industry partners
- Assistance with job search and entry into paid employment
- Access to specialised support for disabilities (access to modified equipment, computers, transport, etc.)
- Assistance with transport to access training and employment
- Personal and specialist support to address psychosocial issues such as lack of confidence and difficult home environments
- Follow-up support and industry specific mentoring to retain employment
- Access to mentoring opportunities including culturally and regionally appropriate mentoring, life skills mentoring
- Access to peer support networks to build positive influences and share skills and experiences

The provider(s) is expected to identify opportunities to establish new or link to existing social enterprise, in locations where other employment opportunities may be limited.

3.3.6 Post-employment support service

Once a participant has secured employment, the provider(s) is expected to continue to support participants to ensure they are able to retain employment for 6 months (or more if required). Post-employment support could include the provider:

- Working with employers to understand the work that the participant will be engaged in, to develop tailored coaching for the participant on work tasks.
- Working with employers to understand any issues that may arise or have arisen, such as workplace relations, to support the participant with tailored coaching, mentoring and practical skills.
- Working with employers to address any barriers arising for the participant or employer and negotiating with employers adjustments as needed.
- Working with employers to ensure on-site mentoring is available for the participant.
- If the role is found to be unsuitable for the participant or employer, the provider(s) must work with the participant using a supportive approach to build on the strengths and experience and seek further training, education and/or other work opportunities.

3.3.7 Housing independence support service

A key outcome of this program is to increase housing independence, where appropriate.

As part of the assessment process, the provider(s) will ask all participants what their housing aspiration is with regard to housing independence, for example to positively exit social housing. There will be different approaches when working with Public Housing, Community Housing, Housing Register and Rent Choice clients.

The provider(s) is responsible for supporting the participant to achieve their stated housing independence outcome, which will be identified in the Training, Employment and Housing Plan. The provider(s) will partner with social housing providers to plan the participant's transition to housing independence.

Where the participant's aspiration is to enter the private rental market, the provider(s) will liaise with relevant services such as FACS Housing PRBS or CHP equivalent to support this. PRBS workers have strong links with real estate agents. Clients may also be eligible for Rent Choice Transition, a medium term tapered subsidy to support positive exits from social housing to establish housing independence in the private rental market.

3.3.8 Discrete trial linked to accommodation

Part of Opportunity Pathways will include a discrete trial in up to two locations (involving up to 20 properties) to test how public housing can be used to build the capacity of tenants to transition into the private rental market through engagement with education and employment support.

The trial will test the use of time-limited leases and directly link ongoing renewal of these leases to meeting education and employment requirements established with the tenant at the commencement of the tenancy.

These 20 properties will be offered to clients on the NSW Housing Register who agree to fully engage in education, employment and support. These clients will be fully supported by the broader Opportunity Pathways program and will also receive intensive tenancy management by FACS.

Clients who form part of the trial who disengage from the program, other than for reasons outside of their control, and do not re-engage within a specific period will be exited from the program. This will mean the client will not have their lease renewed.

The provider(s) is responsible for re-engaging clients into the program in partnership with the FACS Housing tenancy team. This will include informing the tenancy team of any issues prior to lease review.

The provider(s) and FACS Housing will work collaboratively to support these clients. This will include weekly/fortnightly contact with the client, as well as, undertaking joint bi-monthly reviews of the client's progress, or more frequently as required.

3.4 Locations of service delivery

Opportunity Pathways will be delivered across NSW in those locations where a need and service gaps are identified.

The program will be delivered by one or more providers following an Expression of Interest and a Select Tender procurement process. Each bid must deliver all core components of the program, whether delivered as a Prime, Consortia or Hub and Spoke service delivery model.

A provider may tender for one or more locations and must demonstrate their approach to localised delivery in each location. FACS will aim to deliver the program in sites within each FACS District, but final site selection will be based on the strongest tenders that have a presence within each location.

It is expected that the provider(s) will have key service outlets in the locations they are tendering for, but will also offer outreach or pop up services, as needed, including co-location with key referring partners, such as FACS. Through the tender process, the provider(s) must demonstrate the rationale for their tender with regard to the target cohorts and where there is a favourable jobs market and projected employment growth.

There are 20 properties across two sites in Punchbowl and Towradgi which may be available for the trial component of the program. These are indicative sites only as program timing and release of properties need to align.

3.5 Management of brokerage funds

If required, brokerage funding of up to \$2,000 (incl. GST) is available for each participant within the program funding, if participants are not already receiving brokerage funds from other FACS funded programs.

Brokerage funds are only to be used if there are no alternative sources of financial assistance available to address the identified needs of the participant.

Brokerage refers to the flexible use of designated funds to purchase goods and services to enable participants to complete the program. The purpose of brokerage funding for Opportunity Pathways is to:

- Deliver responses that are flexible and consistent with the identified needs of the participants.
- Assist participants to address any problems or barriers that prevent them from completing the Opportunity Pathways program.

The provider(s) is expected to examine whether alternate funding options are available (e.g. a Leaving Care Plan, Supported Independent Living package, Transition to Independent Living Allowance, No Interest Loans etc.)

Brokerage money will be held and used by the provider(s). Up-to-date records of all brokerage provided to each participant, including invoices/ receipts for all goods and services must be maintained and provided for acquittal to FACS.

3.5.1 Brokerage funds – inclusions and exclusions

Brokerage funds may be used for the following purposes:

- Transport costs to training or employment – fuel vouchers, Opal Card top ups, driver education

- Childcare costs – Family day care, centre-based care, respite care, vacation care, before and after school care, pre-school
- Licences/photo ID/birth certificates
- Educational related costs e.g. stationery, books
- General support costs e.g. reading glasses
- Medical and dental expenses – which cannot practically be met through Medicare covered services in a timely manner and which are essential to achieving educational or employment goals; essential optical and dental expenses; mental health expenses to assist the participant in preparing for employment or training which are not covered by Medicare or where there is a gap from the Medicare reimbursement
- Employment related costs - interview/work ready clothing and shoes (if these cannot be sourced from services such as Dress for Success)
- Emergency brokerage requests e.g. food, medical, crisis
- Other – any brokerage requests outside these categories are to be assessed by the provider(s). The provider(s) may wish to engage the Local Design Implementation Committee for input.

Brokerage funds **MAY NOT** be used for:

- Cost of purchasing a car
- Housing assistance e.g. advance rent, bond payments or rent or water arrears as these are available through existing FACS products
- Any debts incurred i.e. property damage, credit card debt
- Any costs that can be met by other programs
- A subsidy to be paid to employers
- Office/work station fit outs for our participants when commencing a new job.

Please refer to the Brokerage Guidelines for more detail.

3.6 Withdrawal and exit from the broader program

Participation in the broader program is voluntary and participants may withdraw or exit at any time. However as part of active case management the provider(s) will endeavour to re-engage a client who has disengaged from the program.

Provider(s) will need to document all reasons regarding exits in the data collected. The circumstances under which participants exit the program may include:

- The participant advises the provider that they no longer wish to participate in the program. The provider is expected to detail the reason for the exit and through a continuous improvement approach, determine if there are deficits within the program that need to be addressed.

- Failure to maintain participation in the Opportunity Pathways program, for example not participating in a course being delivered. The provider is expected to analyse if there were further barriers that could not be resolved using brokerage funds.
- The participant has achieved the employment or housing goals set out in the TEHP. The provider is expected to detail the achievement and continue supporting the participant if they have to re-engage due to a change in circumstance.
- If the client is a Rent Choice recipient there may be an impact on the subsidy and therefore the involvement of a PRBS worker will be required to manage the impact of withdrawal from the program

Withdrawal from the trial sites:

For the clients participating in the trial sites (20 properties in Towradgi and Punchbowl), withdrawal from the program will result in non-renewal of their lease (as per Section 3.3.7).

Links to other programs

3.7 FACS Initiatives

FACS is currently implementing a range of initiatives which relate to employment and other opportunities for tenants. It is important that the Opportunity Pathways provider(s) understand how the Opportunity Pathways program will intersect with other initiatives. Similarly to understand what each of these initiatives offer for clients, in order to avoid duplication and to learn from successful programs.

3.7.1 Rent Choice – Private Rental Subsidies

The NSW Government has a rental assistance program called Rent Choice implemented by FACS for individuals and households to access and sustain a tenancy in the private rental market, where private rental housing is appropriate to their housing needs and circumstances. Rent Choice ultimately provides opportunities and pathways to independence in the private market.

Some Rent Choice recipients may be eligible to participate in the Opportunity Pathways program. The recipients of Rent Choice will be actively referred to participate in Opportunity Pathways program.

Clients may receive one of the following Rent Choice products:

- **Rent Choice Youth** - applies to clients between the ages 16 and 24 years who are capable of living independently; are homeless or at risk of homelessness; are eligible for social housing and who have the capacity and intention to engage in employment, education or training. Rent Choice Youth clients over 17 and having met school leaving requirements can be referred to Opportunity

Pathways. Provider(s) of Opportunity Pathways will be required to work with PRBS workers with the management of the Rent Choice Youth Independent Support Plans. Service provider(s) will be expected to attend the relevant governance group for Rent Choice Youth sites to participate in the referral process.

Other Rent Choice products may be included, however some providers may have sites that do not align with these programs:

- **Rent Choice Transition** – this product provides a subsidy to clients exiting social housing. It is currently being piloted in Western Sydney, South West Sydney, Murrumbidgee, Illawarra Shoalhaven and Hunter.
- **Rent Choice Start Safely** - applies to clients on a low to moderate income; escaping domestic or family violence who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; and are eligible for social housing.
- **Rent Choice Veterans** - applies to former members of the permanent Australian Defence Force who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and who have been on active service during wartime and/or in an operational area, including peacekeeping operations after 1 August 1990.
- **Rent Choice Assist** – applies to people who have experienced a life event (such as illness or a loss of employment that has resulted in financial stress and for whom a time limited subsidy will enable them to get back on their feet.

Rent Choice recipients receive brokerage and therefore are not eligible for further brokerage in the Opportunity Pathways program.

3.7.2 Premier's Youth Initiative

This Premier's Youth Initiative program supports young people who are leaving out-of-home care (OOHC) and are vulnerable to homelessness. The program offers a suite of interventions aimed at bridging the gap between OOHC support and independent living. A specific intervention of the program focuses on employment. These interventions target and build the long-term capacity and resilience of young people with the aim to permanently divert them from the homelessness service system.

The young person participating in the program will be connected with a:

- **Personal Advisor** – who will support the client to implement their leaving care plan, establish a life-long habit of growing and maintaining their support networks, navigate mainstream and specialist services as required and manage crisis and change effectively;
- **Education and employment mentor** – Provide practical assistance to support, guide and encourage clients to achieve their education and/or employment goals. Assist clients with navigating course enrollment and support clients to apply for jobs, develop behaviours for successful interviewing and persevere in employment;

- **Transitions support worker** –Transitional support assists the young person to gradually develop the skills, knowledge and strategies to manage their own accommodation needs. This support will continue until either the young person can manage independently or until the close of the program. This service element is allocated to clients based on need and program capacity.

3.7.3 Place Plans

Place Plans is a program that uses a place-making approach to public housing estates experiencing significant disadvantage. Place Plans is implemented by FACS in partnership with social housing tenants, stakeholder groups and local communities aimed at:

- Improving client outcomes;
- Facilitating opportunities, building capacity and strengthening communities;
- Contributing to breaking the cycle of disadvantage in the longer term;
- Some Place Plans have a specific focus on employment.

It will be a requirement that where a Place Plan site and OP delivery align that a partnership is established to link clients within the public housing estates to OP.

4.1.4 Career Pathways Program

This is a short term initiative delivered in select locations to link social housing clients to partial qualifications, job placements and post job placement support. Career Pathways will be completed in June 2019. Opportunity Pathways will integrate Career Pathways activities beyond this timeframe.

3.8 Other Agency Initiatives

3.8.1 NSW Department of Industry

The NSW Department of Industry provides programs for citizens in NSW to access training and services including:

Smart, Skilled and Hired Youth Employment Program: this is an initiative connecting young people (15 to 24 years) to training, mentoring, work experience placements, and other support to build their skills and experience. The program operates in Western Sydney, the Central Coast and Hunter, New England/North West and the North Coast. Opportunity Pathways provider(s) delivering the program in these locations will be expected to establish referral pathways for this age group to the Smart, Skilled and Hired Youth Employment program. This approach will reduce duplication of service in these locations.

3.8.2 Commonwealth Government

The Commonwealth Department of Jobs and Small Business provides people from all backgrounds with access to services and support to help them

overcome barriers and develop the required skills to gain employment and participate in society. A full list of programs can be found at www.jobs.gov.au/employment. This includes Job Active, Parents Next, Transition to Work. It is expected that provider(s) will understand the service system in locations they tender for and ensure that there is no duplication of service delivery.

4 Program Governance

4.1 Program management

The program management function within FACS will be performed by the Commissioning Division/Housing Directorate (see Figure 2). This Directorate will report to the FACS Housing and Homelessness Strategy Steering Committee, which is chaired at Deputy Secretary level.

4.2 Program design and monitoring

As this program is a pilot, FACS will convene a Central Program Design and Monitoring Group to oversee all locations and ensure a continuous improvement approach to the delivery of the program.

This group will meet monthly in the first six months, with review thereafter.

4.3 Local Design Implementation Committees

The provider(s) is expected to establish, chair and provide secretariat support for a Local Design Implementation Committee (LDIC) for each location of operation and to determine its membership or access an existing advisory committee (e.g. as established by Department of Industry for the Smart, Skilled and Hired Youth Employment program).

LDIC membership should comprise the following:

- Local FACS Housing tenancy staff
- Local FACS Commissioning and Planning staff
- Local industry bodies
- Local employers
- Specialist homelessness services or other relevant support providers
- Aboriginal support provider/s
- A tenant representative
- An Aboriginal community representative and/or a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse community representative connected with the program

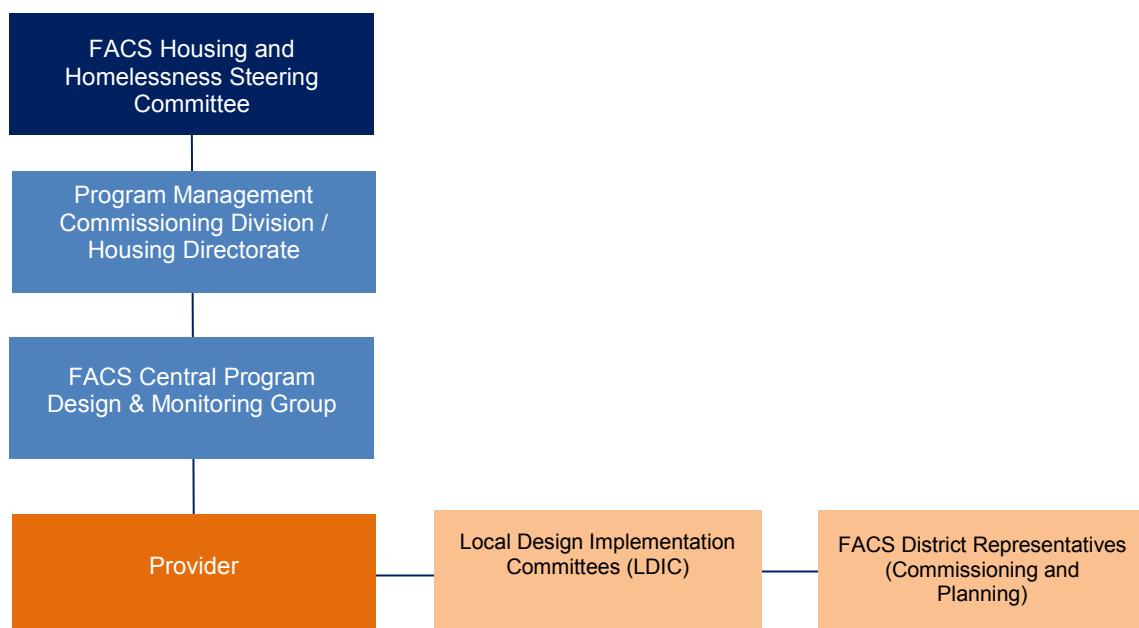
The Opportunity Pathways provider(s) should organise and chair the LDIC meetings, the distribution of agenda and minutes, along with relevant updates and progress reporting. All relevant reporting materials are to be provided to the Central Program Design and Monitoring Group.

The LDIC will have the following responsibilities:

- To consider implementation issues, referral pathways, service user feedback reports, client disengagement concerns and quarterly service data. Service user data provided to the LDIC will be de-identified.
- Discussing and agreeing on actions to be taken to address issues such as low referrals or take up; or when clients disengage.
- Discuss requests for local adaptations for the service delivery within their district and recommend these and model improvements to the Central Program Design and Monitoring Group, for their consideration.
- Discuss unique brokerage requests and the actions to best meet the clients needs.

LDIC meetings will be held quarterly unless otherwise agreed by members.

Figure 2. Opportunity Pathways Program Governance Structure



4.4 Rent Choice

Provider(s) are required to participate in Partnership Facilitation Group (PFG) meetings for Rent Choice Youth clients where there is site alignment.

4.5 Roles and Responsibilities

Position	Roles and Responsibilities
Opportunity Pathways provider(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design, deliver and monitor the services • Undertake continuous improvement of the services in collaboration with FACS and other partners • Comply with contractual requirements on progress and financial reporting, including Brokerage Expenditure Plan • Undertake all program promotions to recruit participants • Facilitate local advisory committees and attend all other inter-agencies as required to ensure successful delivery of the program • Build and maintain relationships with all stakeholders. • Submit reports including progress reports to FACS using DEX or using other agreed formats. • Manage relationships with subcontracted or referral delivery partners and ensure their services are delivered as required
FACS Head Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the central coordination of the program. • Collaborate in co-design with provider/s to ensure the program is meeting requirements • Collaborate in continuous improvement approach with the providers to ensure the program is continuing to meet requirements and address issues arising • Manage the evaluation of the program.
FACS District contract managers (Commissioning and Planning staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract management of providers to ensure activities are being delivered as intended • Designated roles who will liaise with the program provider(s) and ensure that it is being delivered as planned • Will ensure FACS Housing staff and other providers are linked into the program and actively referring • Provide feedback on program development and implementation to FACS head office as required
PRBS workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FACS Private Rental Brokerage Service (PRBS) and Rent Choice workers in order to refer clients wanting support to access private rental, including Rent Choice.
FACS Housing staff (Tenancy and Access & Demand)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively refer tenants/applicants to the program • Intensive tenancy management as required
Participating CHPs/ ACHPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively refer tenants/applicants to the program

5 Data Collection, Reporting, Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

The provider(s) will be required to comply with FACS reporting and data collection requirements. This may include the use of the Data Exchange (DEX) system where feasible and other systems. The provider(s) must have systems in place to allow them to meet their data collection and reporting obligations.

Performance information is required to be collected by service providers at the client level and entered directly into the department's performance reporting solution.

The performance information required includes, but is not limited to:

- Client demographic information
- Date recruited into the program, referrals received and outcome (decline / accept) and reasons for declining, referral source
- Eligibility status e.g. living in public housing, on the NSW Housing Register, a Rent Choice recipient, living in community housing
- Service delivery information e.g.
 - services delivered and status of activity completion/barriers
 - date commenced and date completed pre-employment preparation
 - date commenced and date completed employment support
 - date commenced and date completed post-employment support
 - Confirmation of further training or employment requirements and details
 - Details of support accessed
- Client outcomes against TEHP goals e.g.
 - Description of training outcomes
 - Description of employment outcomes
 - Employment status including paid employment – casual, part-time, full-time, contract
- Amount of brokerage used and for what purposes

The discrete trial will have additional monitoring requirements.

Information must be provided in accordance with the Data Exchange Protocols available at https://dex.dss.gov.au/policy-guidance/dex_data_exchange_protocols.

Where reporting can not be achieved using the DEX, negotiations will need to take place with FACS to determine the most suitable approach.

There will be rigorous review of monitoring data to inform ongoing design and continuous improvement. The Central Program Design and Monitoring Group will oversee this.

FACS will also extract its own data with regard to client outcomes specifically to monitor positive exits from social housing or private rental assistance.

Participating community housing providers will extract their own data and make this available to FACS to support program monitor and program evaluation.

6 Program Evaluation

The provider will be required to participate in an evaluation of this program through the provision of data and participation in other evaluation activities as set out in the evaluation plan. The evaluation will link to the Human Services Outcomes Framework and the Future Directions Evaluation Strategy.